

2023–2024 | 124th Season

Saturday, September 30, at 5:00

Alcee Chriss III Organ

Sowerby *Comes Autumn Time*

Price *Retrospection*

Franck/arr. Chriss from Symphony in D minor:
II. Allegretto

Guillou Toccata, Op. 9

Schumann Canonic Study in A-flat major, Op. 56, No. 4

Reger Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H, Op. 46

This program runs approximately 1 hour, 15 minutes, and will be performed without an intermission.

This concert is part of the **Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ Experience**, supported through a generous grant from the **Wyncote Foundation**.

Philadelphia Orchestra concerts are broadcast on WRTI 90.1 FM on Sunday afternoons at 1 PM, and are repeated on Monday evenings at 7 PM on WRTI HD 2. Visit www.wrti.org to listen live or for more details.

The
Philadelphia
Orchestra
Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Music and Artistic Director

SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Hear legends perform recitals in Verizon Hall.

Save 10% when you buy all three!

philorch.org/2324season



**YO-YO MA AND
KATHRYN STOTT**

Friday, April 12
8:00 PM



YUJA WANG

Tuesday, April 30
8:00 PM



EVGENY KISSIN

Wednesday, May 15
8:00 PM

The Philadelphia Orchestra does not perform on the Spotlight series.

Photos: Felix Broede, Julia Wesely, Mark Mann

Soloist



Emily Gan

A featured star in the PBS documentary *Pipe Dreams* (2019), **Alcee Chriss III** is an organist and keyboardist from Fort Worth, Texas. The winner of the 2017 Canadian International Organ Competition and the Firmin Swinnen Silver Medal at the 2016 Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition, he has been celebrated for his "grace, skill and abundant proficiency" by the *Journal Assist News* in Albuquerque. Of his most recent solo recording at Montreal

Symphony Hall, *Art et Rhapsodie* (2019), the *American Record Guide* wrote that "he plays with clarity, imagination, musicality, virtuosity, and yes, personality."

Mr. Chriss has performed throughout North America and Europe. Recent and upcoming performances include the International Orgelsommer in Stuttgart, Germany; Stockholm City Hall in Sweden; and as soloist with the Montreal Symphony in a performance of Copland's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra. Other engagements include the Princeton University Chapel in New Jersey; Spreckels Organ Pavilion in San Diego, California; and the International Organ Summer in Karlsruhe, Germany. In July 2022 he was a featured performer at the national convention of the American Guild of Organists, held in Seattle, Washington. In July 2019 he was appointed university organist and artist-in-residence at Wesleyan University, where he teaches courses in organ and keyboard skills. In October 2019 he was awarded his Doctor of Music degree from McGill University, where he studied with Hans-Ola Ericsson. He previously studied at Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he received his master's degree in historical keyboard and a bachelor's degree in organ performance, studying with Olivier Latry, Marie-Louise Langlais, and James David Christie.

Mr. Chriss is active as a church musician and guest lecturer and remains engaged with his lifelong love of gospel and jazz music. He is currently assistant organist at Trinity Church Wall Street in New York City and serves on the editorial board of *Vox Humana* magazine.

The Music

The music performed on this afternoon's program offers both an overview of organ repertory from two centuries and a display of the capabilities and range of Verizon Hall's Fred J. Cooper Memorial Organ's four manuals, five divisions, and nearly 7,000 pipes. These works represent both European and American composers, as well as orchestral music arranged by Alcée Chriss III.

A native of Michigan, composer Leo Sowerby (1895–1968) centered his musical career on the Episcopal Church, including in Chicago and at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Sowerby's concert overture **Comes Autumn Time** was commissioned and premiered by American composer/organist Eric DeLamarter in 1916 at Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church. The work was so well received that Sowerby subsequently created an orchestrated version. *Comes Autumn Time* was inspired by Canadian poet Bliss Carman's poem "Autumn," which Sowerby requested be included in each sold copy of his organ piece. The optimism and energy of Carman's poem can be heard in the tunefulness of the opening pedal theme against a toccata-like accompaniment.

The music of Arkansas native Florence Price (1887–1953) is enjoying a renaissance in the performance arena, and she has become recognized as a leading American composer of the 1930s and '40s. Her repertory includes 100 songs, as well as orchestral works, choral pieces, and music for piano, organ, and chamber ensemble. **Retrospection** for organ was originally titled *An Elf on a Moonbeam*, which Price paired with her organ piece *The Hour Glass* (originally titled *Sandman*). A musical fairy tale for organ, *Retrospection* reflects shades of the French compositional school, with a middle section capturing the mythical elf frolicking on and off a moonbeam.

Born in what is now Belgium, organist and composer César Franck (1822–90) was considered by his father to be a child prodigy, akin to Mozart and Liszt. Franck gave his first public concerts by age 10 and like Mozart, was taken in search of the best teachers, eventually enrolling in the Paris Conservatory. Early on, Franck was recognized as a virtuoso with extraordinary improvisatory skills, leading to a stellar career as an organist, composer, and collaborator with organ builders on new instruments.

Franck's orchestral Symphony in D minor was completed in 1888 when the composer was 65 years old and it was his only mature symphony. The second movement **Allegretto** combines elements of a traditional slow movement and a scherzo, featuring lush orchestration and a haunting English horn melody over harp and pizzicato strings. Alcee Chriss has taken this elegant symphonic movement and created the arrangement for organ heard today.

French composer, organist, and pedagogue Jean Guillou (1930–2019) served as titular organist at the Church of Saint-Eustache in Paris from 1963 to 2015 and directed the design of the church's current organ. He composed more than 90 organ, chamber, and orchestral works, issued more than 100 recordings, and published several books on both organ and poetry. Viewed as a revolutionary in organ performance and improvisation, Guillou was described after his death as a composer who "opened the repertoire of the 'king of instruments' to areas which had been considered to be unimaginable before."

Dating from 1963, **Toccata** utilizes three subjects, with an imposing fortissimo theme opening the work. A more melodious second theme enters on a solo stop over a restless accompaniment, which in turn becomes the third theme, leading to a ferocious non-stop epilogue. Guillou described this piece as showcasing "two aspects of the organ—melodic flexibility and an almost aggressive percussiveness, which combine to give the instrument its tragic and flamboyant powers of expression."

Robert Schumann (1810–56) began his career studying law but set his sights on becoming a concert pianist, until an injury to his right hand forced him to abandon that ambition. His interest in the organ was rooted in performances of Bach's works by Felix Mendelssohn, launching Schumann on an intense *Fugenpassion* obsession with counterpoint. It is unclear if Schumann ever studied organ, but as he wrote at one point, "Miss no opportunity to practice the organ. No other instrument avenges itself on impure and shoddy composition as playing like the organ does."

Schumann composed **Six Canonic Studies**, Op. 56, in 1845 for a custom-built pedal piano, a single keyboard instrument onto which was installed a 29-note pedalboard. Despite his enthusiasm for the instrument and its common use by organists for practice, the pedal piano never really caught on, and Schumann's Canonic Studies were subsequently transcribed and arranged for other instruments, including organ, two pianos, and chamber orchestra. No. 4 in A-flat major (marked *Heartfelt*) conveys the range of the canon form in a variety of timbres, registrations, and phrasing. Schumann's compositional texture is highly pianistic, with a relatively unassuming pedal line and quick-moving 16th-notes in the upper manuals.

Max Reger (1873–1916) considered himself a late-19th-century continuation of the classical traditions of Beethoven and Brahms. Reger's organ repertory included more than 100 works, including the popular **Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H, Op. 46**. Reger's compositional style, fusing a counterpoint-rich Baroque texture with 19th-century Wagnerian harmonies, presents a challenge for performers and makes his organ works among the hardest to perform.

Since Bach's time, the letters of his name have formed thematic roots of works in tribute to the Baroque master, with the letters of Bach spelling the notes B-flat, A, C, and B natural. It was only fitting that Reger add to this repertory; he believed

Bach to be the "be-all and end-all of music—true progress lies and resides in him alone." Reger inscribed his 1900 chromatic and improvisatory Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H to 19th-century composer Josef Rheinberger, whose own music was heavily influenced by Bach. The principal B-A-C-H motif is introduced in the opening Fantasy in the pedals, and the ensuing Fugue presents the theme beginning at almost imperceptible dynamic levels. The four-note motif is then subjected to augmentation, diminution, and inversion in a true archetype of traditional counterpoint, exploiting the organ's dynamic capabilities and breadth of registrations to the fullest.

—Nancy Plum

Program notes © 2023. All rights reserved. Program notes may not be reprinted without written permission from Nancy Plum.

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Augmented: A perfect or major interval where the top note has been raised by one half step

Canon: A device whereby an extended melody, stated in one part, is imitated strictly and in its entirety in one or more other parts

Chord: The simultaneous sounding of three or more tones

Counterpoint: The art of combining different melodic lines in a musical composition

Fantasy: A composition free in form and more or less fantastic in character

Fugue: A piece of music in which a short melody is stated by one voice and then imitated by the other voices in succession, reappearing throughout the entire piece in all the voices at different places

Harmony: The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions

Inversion: Chords in which the notes have changed position, and the tonic, or root, of the chord is no longer the lowest note

Meter: The symmetrical grouping of musical rhythms

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Pizzicato: Plucked

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." Usually the third movement of symphonies and quartets that was introduced by Beethoven to replace the minuet. The scherzo is followed by a gentler section called a trio, after which the scherzo is repeated. Its characteristics are a rapid tempo, vigorous rhythm, and humorous contrasts. Also an instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character.

Timbre: Tone color or tone quality

Toccata: Literally "to touch." A piece intended as a display of manual dexterity, often free in form and almost always for a solo keyboard instrument.

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegretto: A tempo between walking speed and fast

Innig: Heartfelt, sincere, fervent

DYNAMIC MARKS

Diminuendo: Decreasing volume

Fortissimo (ff): Very loud

Tickets & Patron Services

We want you to enjoy each and every concert experience you share with us. We would love to hear about your experience at the Orchestra and it would be our pleasure to answer any questions you may have.

Please don't hesitate to contact us via phone at 215.893.1999, in person in the lobby, or online at philorch.org/ContactPatronServices.

Subscriber Services:
215.893.1955, Mon.–Fri., 9 AM–5 PM

Patron Services:
215.893.1999
Mon.–Fri., 10 AM–6 PM
Sat.–Sun., 11 AM–6 PM
Performance nights open until 8 PM

Ticket Office:
Mon.–Sun., 10 AM–6 PM
The Academy of Music
Broad and Locust Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tickets: 215.893.1999

Concert dates (two hours before concert time and through intermission):
The Kimmel Center
Broad and Spruce Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Web Site: For information about The Philadelphia Orchestra and its upcoming concerts or events, please visit philorch.org.

Individual Tickets: Don't assume that your favorite concert is sold out. Subscriber turn-ins and other special promotions can make last-minute tickets available. Visit us online at philorch.org or call us at 215.893.1999 and ask for assistance.

Subscriptions: The Philadelphia Orchestra offers a variety of subscription options each season. These multi-concert packages feature the best available seats, ticket exchange privileges, discounts on individual tickets, and many other benefits. Learn more at philorch.org.

Ticket Turn-In: Subscribers who cannot use their tickets are invited to donate them and receive a tax-deductible acknowledgement by calling 215.893.1999. Twenty-four-hour notice is appreciated, allowing other patrons the opportunity to purchase these tickets and guarantee tax-deductible credit.

PreConcert Conversations: PreConcert Conversations are held prior to most Philadelphia Orchestra subscription concerts, beginning one hour before the performance. Conversations are free to ticket-holders, feature discussions of the season's music and music-makers, and are supported in part by the Hirschberg–Goodfriend Fund in memory of Adolf Hirschberg, established by Juliet J. Goodfriend.

Lost and Found: Please call 215.670.2321.

Late Seating: Late seating breaks usually occur after the first piece on the program or at intermission in order to minimize disturbances to other audience members who have already begun listening to the music. If you arrive after the concert begins, you will be seated only when appropriate breaks in the program allow.

Accessible Seating: Accessible seating is available for every performance. Please call Patron Services at 215.893.1999 or visit philorch.org for more information.

Assistive Listening: With the deposit of a current ID, hearing enhancement devices are available at no cost from the House Management Office in Commonwealth Plaza. Hearing devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Large-Print Programs: Large-print programs for every subscription concert are available in the House Management Office in Commonwealth Plaza. Please ask an usher for assistance.

Fire Notice: The exit indicated by a red light nearest your seat is the shortest route to the street. In the event of fire or other emergency, please do not run. Walk to that exit.

No Smoking: All public space on the Kimmel Cultural Campus is smoke-free.

Cameras and Recorders: The taking of photographs or the recording of Philadelphia Orchestra concerts is strictly prohibited, but photographs are allowed before and after concerts and during bows. By attending this Philadelphia Orchestra concert you consent to be photographed, filmed, and/or otherwise recorded for any purpose in connection with The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Phones and Paging Devices: All electronic devices—including cellular telephones, pagers, and wristwatch alarms—should be turned off while in the concert hall.